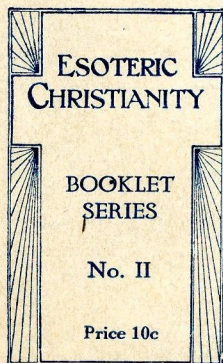


THE MAJESTY OF PAIN



by
MAX WARDALL

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Editor "ESOTERIC CHRISTIANITY"

Author Esoteric Booklet Series

ESOTERIC FACTS OF CHRISTIANITY

THE REAL SUPERMEN

HEALTH AND THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

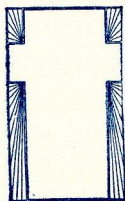
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THE MAJESTY OF PAIN

When we have reached the sumit of human attainment, that eminence so exalted that the human mind staggers in its contemplation; when we have reached that holy hill, exultant and free, we shall look back on our vanished sorrows as a strong man remembers the stumblings of childhood. They were real sorrows then, but now, in the glory of manhood, they appear but childish foreshadowings of that majesty to be.



The Majesty of Pain



FROM the far reaches of the past, we hear the son of Israel plaintively exclaim, "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward," and we vaguely wonder whether his remark was of temporary or eternal and universal application. Since men began to speculate on the meaning of life, this one question, "Why do we suffer?" has received the most consistent attention, but it cannot be said that the problem has ever been solved or the question answered by the philosophers or scientists of to-day or yesterday. It has remained for the mystic and the dreamer to solve this riddle of destiny. To him, the scientist of the unseen world, we owe the answer to this insistent, piteous interrogation that ever arises from the human heart, "Why do we suffer?"

Some of the philosophers, dredging in the swamps of human misery, have answered the inquiry by asserting that, "Evolution involves the struggle of the units for growth and unceasing adaptation to new conditions; that contest and conflict are necessary in order that the fit may survive, and where we have struggle and war, some must fall; that this process is endless and therefore pain is eternal."

Another contends that pain is only temporary;

that, with the growth and development of Science and her achievements and the steady expansion of the altruistic impulses in man, at last all suffering will vanish and the last blemish on our civilization will disappear.

Yet another teaches that life is just what the individual chooses to make it, that some would suffer in paradise, while others would smile in hell. One of these said, "Life is a comedy for the man who thinks, a tragedy to him who feels," and Elbert Hubbard remarked that, "It is a wise man who can take the lemons fate hands out to him, and start a lemonade stand."

There are many other offerings to this problem of fate. If you go to the scientist, who classifies and compares the objects and phenomena of life, and ask him to explain the problem of human suffering, he will reply, "The scientist recognizes Nature as a great laboratory in which are being combined the elements that will make new and wonderful compounds. She is building in the human kingdom a new and splendid type of man, who shall be the paragon of creation and the crown of all her efforts. In building this type she must be ruthless and disregarding of the individual; the pain and suffering endured by human beings are so much wastage on the wheel; the wheel grinds on unheeding through the ages toward the supreme and final purpose. There is no individual compensation

for the suffering we endure, no immortality, except as it may appear in our children who come after us; but they, too, shall die, yielding the fruits of their suffering to their plasm bearers." Not a very comforting picture to beguile from the ravaging cares of today, and yet, it is not less comforting than the one we gain from the Churchman. Ask him why "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward," and he will respond that the ways of God are inscrutable. We cannot know His purpose or why we suffer. We can only know that He creates us and sends us into a world filled with vivid temptations, violence, and harrowing events, and no matter what our natural endowment may be, we are expected to find our way unstained and uncorrupted through the earthly maze. One, He created a genius, another a drooling imbecile; one rich, another poor; one beautiful and gracious, another ugly and repellent to behold; one a Nero, another a saint; and all are expected to find the same reality beneath the veil of unreality. Unless each sees and accepts the belief in personal salvation, through Christ, he must suffer an eternity of castigation for his blindness. If one is born in the slums of a great city of drunken and degraded parentage, and slimed from infancy in the sewage of corruption, he must, under pain of everlasting destruction, find the same goal as one who is born in a pure and blessed family, surrounded from birth with wise and ennobling influences. Who can

do it? And why is God so generous with some and so parsimonious with others? Has the soul, born in the blight of sin, done something before birth to merit his awful handicap? Under this plan we wonder if God may not be angry with most of the babes He creates. We feel with the little girl who said:

"Mamma, why did papa have appendicitis and have to pay the doctor five hundred dollars?"

Mamma replied, "It was God's will, dear."

The little girl thought a moment and then inquired, "Well, was God mad at papa or pleased with the doctor?"

There is yet another school of thought which has shown remarkable vitality during the last few years. It teaches that pain is an illusion. Its exponents tell us that there is but one Mind in the Universe, and that Mind is exempt from discomfort and disease, is healthy and harmonious, and if we but ally ourselves in consciousness with this Mind, all inharmonies in the mortal environments disappear, never to return.

From out this wilderness of speculation is there to appear a teaching that will give us an answer that will satisfy both the head and the heart? We answer that such a teaching has appeared, throwing a tremendous flood of light on the partial explanations of the past and the groping theories of the present.

This teaching is embodied in modern Theosophy.

Theosophy denies that man is a cog in a wheel

that grinds on through the ages, crushing and mangling the weak and unfit.

Nor is he a helpless manikin created by an unknown and unknowable Being, who decrees at birth whether he shall survive or perish.

Nor does it wholly concede that the ills of life are imaginary things conjured from the darkness of mortal mind.

The Ancient Wisdom, as this body of Theosophical teaching is sometimes called, points out with invincible logic the steps in human evolution, showing that the problem of pain is so inextricably interwoven with the whole evolutionary plan, that to understand one is to know the other. One who knows what evolution is, has solved the riddle of destiny; one who knows the part pain plays in evolution has the keys to heaven and to hell.

We learn that man is a potential God having within him a germ of infinite perfection that will unfold forever and ever. In order that this germ may be perfected much experience is needed in the process. Life is the school wherein that experience is found. We are all children in that school, ignorant, wayward and rebellious, perhaps, but destined some day to master all the teachings that God our Schoolmaster has designed for us to learn. We are able to learn, because within us is implanted the seeds of infinite intelligence. The ways of the Schoolmaster are not

inscrutable, but marvelously understandable and credible. There are certain guiding rules of the school which are called natural laws, that we are first required to learn. Then there are moral and spiritual laws that must be comprehended ere we graduate. It is the refusal to understand, heed and obey these guiding rules that bring to us our sufferings. We are not always punished immediately when we violate one of these rules, but instead, God has established laws of inevitable and invariable sequence, so that every act, feeling or thought that is contrary to these laws brings sooner or later its certain effects. It is but another statement of the Biblical warning, "God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." Sometimes we do not perceive any immediate results of our wrong doing and conclude that we have defeated the law. This immunity is only apparent, for there is no escape from the reaper. If one falls from a building and injures himself we see an obvious violation of natural law with its predicable sequence. But if one speaks slanderous words of another, the slanderer may appear to escape any ill results, but the law takes account of the evil and the slanderer some day will have meted out to him the exact result of his act. "I say unto you that for every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of Judgment."

It is our failure to observe and take note of the

working of the law that leads us into so much trouble. We fall into the same pit time and time again. We make the same mistake hundreds of times before we observe that the pain growing from the act exceeds the pleasure realized.

A vast amount of suffering would be obviated if human beings would study nature more and books less. I sometimes think if we could throw away all our learning and study the migrations of birds, the swelling tides and the growth of the plants, we would gain enormously in plain, everyday happiness.

A noted thinker and instructor in a great university said recently, after forty years of labor in training his pupils' minds in philosophy, science and ethics, "The longer I live the more I marvel at the ability of the human mind to resist the introduction of knowledge." It is truly our inveterate stupidity that serves often to keep us in the trough of disaster. This is especially observable in the matter of health. The laws of health have been discovered. It is scientifically certain that one can live a long life in perfect health, if he will but follow the laws of health control; but despite the fact that a vast amount of the agony of the world arises from disease, few there are who are willing to exercise the necessary self-restraint or to give the required tension of mind to the ascertainment of these laws of health and harmony. There is no one, who has not utterly destroyed or irreparably injured

his body, who may not by intelligent study and deep reflection learn how to live so that he may become strong and well.

The same may be said of poverty, that grim spectre that haunts us from the cradle to the grave. What would we not give to escape the taint of his poisoned breath? Here, also, we have failed to see the obvious, for the law of abundance has been discovered. We may live without want, fear or privation if we will but seek the Kingdom. Poverty does not exist for the man who has traveled the path of self-discovery. To him the law of abundance is as clear as the law of gravity. Man is intended to exercise that same peaceful and joyous dominion over Nature that Jesus exemplified. He was the royal giver. He gave everything he had, even life itself. We must learn something of this regal art of giving if we shall escape from the clutch of poverty. We acquire a few possessions and then we begin instinctively to hug and hold them close, refusing to share. That is fatal. Penury lies that way. Nature abhors an excess as much as a vacuum. The man who grows rich and refuses to give, as he has received, must some day wear the beggar's robe. It may not be in this life, but in some life, somewhere, Nature will exact requital.

“Who toiled a slave may come anew a Prince
For gentle worthiness and merit won;
Who ruled a King may wander earth in rags
For things done and undone.”

It must be clear, however, to all who have passed the embryonic stage of thought, that there are some painful happenings that befall us that are in no way related to the deeds of our present life. Not long ago a man was released from an Eastern penitentiary after serving thirty years of confinement for a murder he did not commit. The real assassin confessed to the crime on his deathbed.

During the last three thousand years millions of children have been born into the world hopelessly blind or afflicted with some monstrous disease that has condemned them to a living death. Visit our asylums for defective children throughout our own land and you will find thousands of souls encased in deformed and repulsive bodies.

Over the plains of Belgium, Poland, Rumania and Serbia today are aged and hopeless men and women, starving and desolate, children scurrying like hunted animals before the flame of war.

For what crime did the innocent man suffer who spent thirty years behind prison bars?

When and where did the children sin that they were born blind? Does God blind the innocent for the

sins of others? Does He encase an immortal soul in a monstrous and revolting body unfit for the animal kingdom?

Does He burn and desolate the homes of aged men and women who have done no wrong save to lift feeble hands of pleading? Does He starve and impale helpless children? Does He watch with un pitying eyes the long, long night of horror?

Search where you will, among the teachings of the past and present, and you will find no clear answer to these questions except in the teaching of Reincarnation.

In this doctrine we find the key to the house of mystery. Reincarnation teaches that the souls who are born to this uncalculated misery are gathering the harvest of past sowings; that each soul has lived many times on earth before, in other bodies, doing somewhat that was good and much that was ill. In this life they are reaping the fruit of previous wrongs. They were not created at birth by God and flung headlong into a vortex of sorrow and pain; but each came into his new life with the heritage of his past stored within the soul. At birth he was guided to the parents who could give him the body he had earned by his past livings, to the nation and environment that would permit the out-working of his soul heredity.

If we could glance back along the hidden vistas, behind the gateways of birth, we would see that a perfect law was operating to bring to each soul his just

deserts, and that nothing ever happens or fails to happen that is not a full and just expression of the law of compensation. This law is just, true and yet inexorable. It punishes not, it merely operates. It brings good, as well as ill, if we have earned it. This is why one is born to a joyous and serene existence, another to lifelong woe; one to health and the sweet graces of friendship, another to disease and the life of a lonely outcast. In the *Light of Asia* we read of this law:

"It seeth everywhere and marketh all;
Do right—it recompenseth! Do one wrong—
The equal retribution must be made,
Though Dharma tarry long.

"It knows not wrath nor pardon; utter true
Its measures mete, its faultless balance weighs;
Times are as nought, tomorrow it will judge,
Or after many days.

"By this the slayer's knife did stab himself;
The unjust judge hath lost his own defender;
The false tongue dooms its lie; the creeping thief
and spoiler rob, to render."

There is nothing in this teaching to offend the most thoughtful. It is not, as some suppose, a strange, alien doctrine brought from the Orient to please the

jaded fancy of the Western world. It is a serious, dignified, world-answering truth. It has been accepted for thousand of years by countless members of the human family, and to-day there are 600,000,000 of the world inhabitants who accept Reincarnation as the explanation of life's mysteries.

It is one of the oldest theories of immortality, and one possessing an inexhaustible vitality. Long before the birth of Christ, many poets, teachers and philosophers accepted and taught that this life was but the continuation of former lives, and that our actions in the past determined our conditions now. You may take down your Homer and read. The blind poet of Greece, who interpreted the wondrous myths of that ancient time, tells us of the adventures of the soul after death, how it goes into the underworld where it is judged. Those who have been bad are sent into Tartarus; those who had been exceptionally wicked are sent into gulfs immeasurably below, while the souls of the guiltless pass into the Elysian fields, a place of pure bliss and enchantment, a land of spring, sunlight and song, with a great central valley of immense beauty, through which flows the river Lethe. Amidst these delightful surroundings, the green grasses, the waving trees and soft air, the souls of the just spend long years, but at last they drink of the waters of Lethe, which gives them forgetfulness of their former lives and they then return to earth in new bodies.

This was 1000 years B. C. and the Roman poet Virgil, who lived a few centuries later, taught the same doctrine. He traces the journey of his hero Aeneas, the Trojan warrior, down into the nether world in search of Anchises, the father of Aeneas. Virgil tells us that, "They fared down the dark ways past the gates of the sun, the meads of asphodel and the land of dreams, where dwell the dead, the phantoms of men outworn." Here Aeneas finds his father Anchises in the Elysian Valley, the bright and happy land of the just. Here Aeneas notes the river Lethe and observes its banks crowded with people "as numerous as insects on the summer air." These people appear to be waiting for something. Aeneas then inquired of his father, "Who are these people who appear to be waiting?" Anchises answers, "These are the souls of those about to be reborn in new bodies and they are drinking the waters that give them oblivion of their former lives."

Aeneas was puzzled and made a remark that, in substance, we often hear from objectors. "Is it possible, father, that any one would wish to leave these delightful shades for the turmoil of the upper world?"

Anchises made answer that it was necessary for us to return again and again to earth life, until we were perfected in all the virtues, even as the Gods.

In the somewhat fantastic but profoundly esoteric instructions that appear in the "Book of the Dead," written in ancient Egypt, we find that souls, after a

sojourn in the after worlds, return to earth in other bodies.

Plato and Pythagoras among ancient philosophers and Fichte, Schelling and Lessing among modern savants, gave heed to the teaching; Pythagoras remembered and spoke of his past lives. The English philosopher Hume, spoke favorably of the teaching as being the only doctrine of immortality that a philosopher could accept.

The poets of all ages have not failed to discern this great truth. Besides Homer and Virgil, we find Browning, Tennyson, Rosetti and Wordsworth teaching this doctrine. Wordsworth writes:

“The soul that rises with us, our life’s star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar.”

The best evidence in support of our previous existences on earth is not found, however, in the testimony of others. It lies within the subconscious mind of each. Within the deep recesses of consciousness, that lie back of the threshold of the objective mind, are vast reservoirs of memory untapped by the ordinary man. Once we transcend the barriers of the purely objective mind, the consciousness widens out into endless vistas of perception that lead us back to the childhood of the soul.

We have, in past ages, lived in Chaldea, India, Egypt, Rome, Greece, Syria and China; there, in other bodies, the soul within, which is the one permanent possession of the ages, has joyed and suffered and, at last, cast off the temporary garment and returned for rest and refreshment into the inner worlds.

If the reader can receive this teaching, it will make life's meaning clear, and will explain the part suffering plays in the growth of the soul. Pain is not an illusion, but a concrete reaction of nature to an abuse of law. If that reaction is instantaneous, as when the man falls from the building and is crushed, we refer to it as cause and effect, but when we experience injury, ingratitude, faithlessness, persecution and sudden and apparently undeserved conditions, we think of them as accidents, or unjust happenings, or perhaps visitations of God. Yet, in truth, these occurrences are no less the reactions of Nature to violated law than the instance of the man who falls from the building. In one case we trace the cause of the injury; in the other instance we cannot, because of our limited vision.

Pain is retributive and compensatory, but it is also educational. While nature is working to restore the balance that has been thrown out of adjustment by the violative act, the soul is working over the experience, extracting its essence and meaning. We do not, as commonly supposed, go into heaven or hell after death, there to suffer or enjoy forever the fruits of our

earthly harvest. We do, truly, after death retire into the inner worlds, but it is only a temporary period of rest and reflection. The soul, the permanent man, during this excarnate period, turns the searchlight of his profound intelligence upon the concepts, images and forms that appear in the mental or memory body. Slowly, but with infinite patience and care, he sorts over the great mass of material gained during earth life. He is like a merchant who has sent his servant afar into a foreign country for merchandise. The servant has returned and the master merchant begins to assort the variegated objects, countless in number and fashion. Much that he finds, alas! has no value to him, but here and there he discovers a shining gem or a priceless fabric that enriches his store. The things of worth become a part of his wealth and resources for future enterprises. Among all of the treasures he discovers, the most priceless of all are the Jewels of Pain, for these become part of his eternal and incorruptible resources. These are laid on the shelves of conscience, faculty, discrimination, fortitude, patience, gentleness and right purpose. We must remember that after each life the soul returns enriched with these new experiences. Conscience is nothing more than the voice of experience; faculty is the fruit of repeated efforts; discrimination has grown from deduction; fortitude from heroic resolves; patience from treading unwelcome paths; gentleness from vic-

tory over violence and cruelty; right purpose from following blind paths that wind and wind upon themselves.

The redeeming and ennobling function of pain that cleanses and purifies the lower nature is set forth in all its majesty in the following lines from an unknown author:

"O Angel of Pain, I think thy face
Will be in all the heavenly place
The sweetest face that I shall see,
The swiftest face to smile on me.

"All other Angels faint and tire:
Joy wearies and forsakes desire;
Hope falters face to face with fate,
And dies because she cannot wait.

"But thou, O faithful, loving Pain,
Hated, reproached, rejected, slain,
Doth ever closer cling and bless
In sweeter, stronger steadfastness.

"Dear, patient Angel, to thine own
Thou comest, and art never known
Till late in some lone, twilight place
The light of thy transfigured face
Shines sudden out, and speechless they
Know they have walked with Christ all day."

If we understood that pain was educational in its function, we would not try to flee from it, or give ourselves anaesthetics and soporifics to deaden and destroy these premonitory symptoms of a universe gone wrong. On the other hand, we would seek, with all intelligent concern, to ascertain wherein we had failed to live in harmony with the good law. If someone did us an injury, we would not begin looking outside of ourselves for the cause, but would search the depths of our own world for the cause. All trouble, pain and wrong are self-imposed, and once we have, by discrimination and clear sight, found the cause of a condition and inhibited its expression, then quickly the effects melt away and we are free. There are no accidents or happenings in the plan; the universe is as orderly as the inside of a watch; within and without may be seen the pressure of exact, absolute and inescapable law. Inexorable? Yes, but unspeakably tender and responsive to him who has learned intelligent obedience, for he soon becomes master of his environment and passes to liberation.

When we have reached the summit of human attainment, that eminence so exalted that now we stand almost abashed at the threshold; when we have reached that holy hill, exultant and free, we shall look back on our vanished sorrows as a strong man remembers the stumblings of childhood. They were real sorrows then, but now in the glory of manhood, they

appear but childish foreshadowings of that majesty to be. This faultless ideal of perfection should ever strengthen us during the days of our childhood. From it will be born the cool, gray courage that fears neither height nor depth, and a will that knows no shadow of turning. This is incarnate in Henley's vision of himself:

"From out the pit that covers me,
Dark as the night from pole to pole,
I thank whatever Gods there be
For my unconquerable soul.

"In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the stern bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

"It matters not how straight the gate,
How charged with punishment the scroll,
I am the Master of my fate;
I am the Captain of my soul."

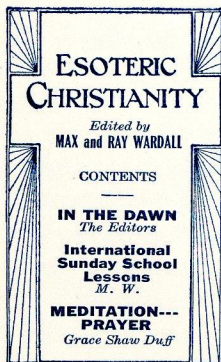
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Editors, Max and Ray Wardall

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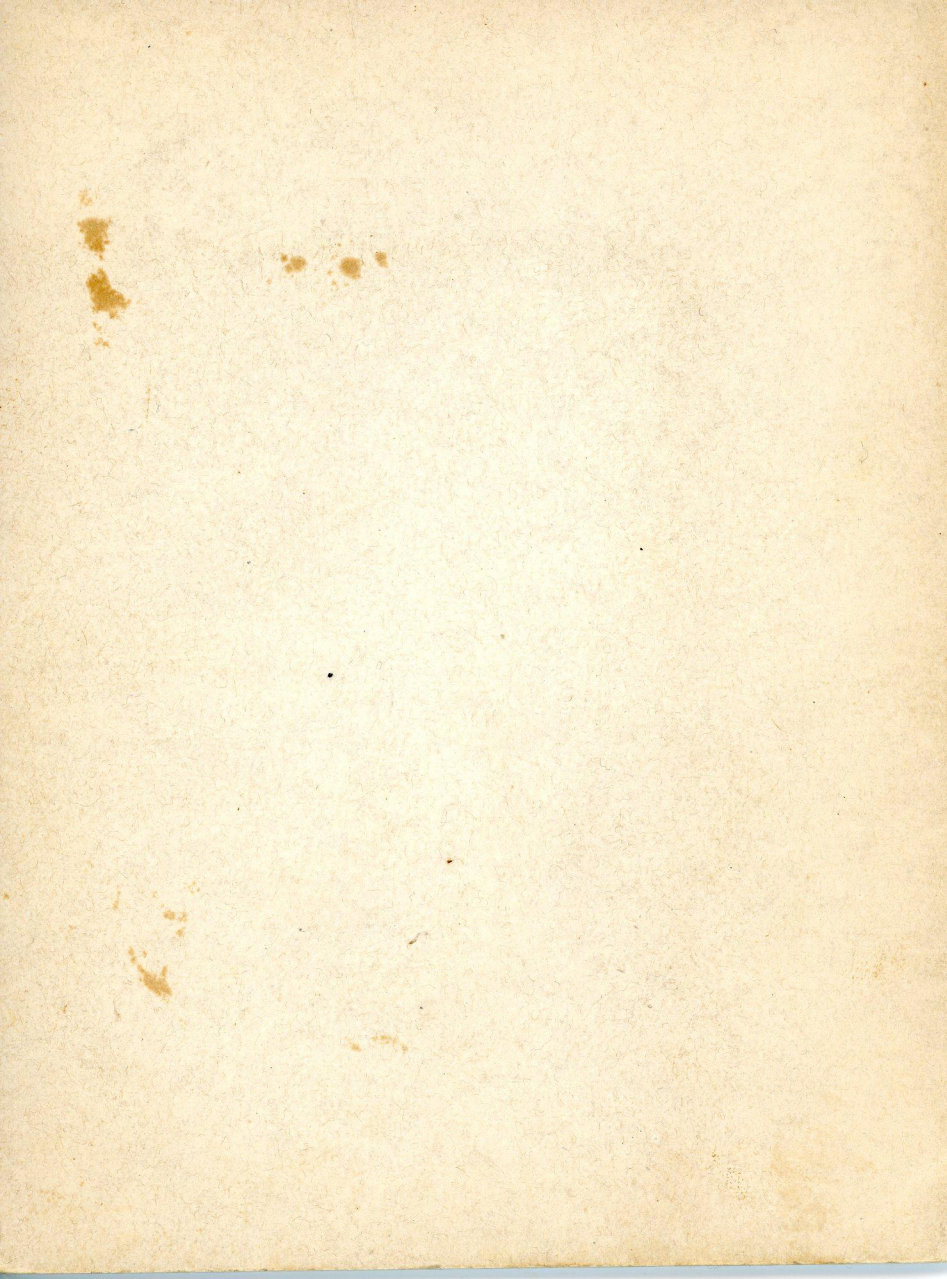
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